per recruitment rules in vogue.

(iv) The Consultant appointed to look into various matters relating to SC/ST employees in ITPO has already submitted his reports which are being considered as and when occasion arises.

Problems of exporters and importers

4242. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether according to the World Banks study deficiencies in transport, ports, power and telecommunication are the basic impediments in the growth of export compeitiveness of the country;

(b) whether according to the Asian Development Bank, obsolete equipment, poor management and low labour productivity are the other problems faced by the exporters–importers of the country;

(c) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(d) the action the Government propose to take to remedy the situation ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) The world Bank in its country Economic Memorandum 1996 has indicated that deficiencies in transport, ports, power and telecommunications are a major handicap for India's growth and export competetiveness

(b) The Asian Development Bank has not commented that obsolete equipment, poor management and low labour productivity as the problems faced by the exporters–importers of the country.

(c) and (d) Government of India on its own has, however, taken a number of steps to improve the efficiency in transport, port, power & telecommunication sectors. The steps like providing a number of fiscal incentives extended to these sectors, tax hoidays, exemption from income tax on the income of dedicated infrastructure funds, formation of new Infrastructure Development Finance Company (IDFC), resources for the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), private sector entry in these fields, proposal for creation of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) etc. are some of the steps taken by the Government in this direction.

Merger of Banks

4243. SHRI B.L. SHANKAR : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any proposal to merge various smaller banks and to set up a bigger bank in order to compete with global banks; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the time by which it is likely to start functioning ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) There is no such proposal under the consideration of the Government at present.

(b) Does not arise.

[Translation]

Recruitment of Handicapped and Women in PSUs

4244. SHRI JAI PRAKASH AGARWAL : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) the number of handicapped and women recruited in the public sector undertakings during each of the last three years, till date; and

(b) the schemes formulated and the target fixed for recruitment of such people in each undertaking during the years 1997 and 1998 ?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) As per the information available from 194 public sector undertakings, 257 handicapped persons and 6,393 women were recruited in public sector undertakings during the period of three years from 1994 to 1996.

(b) As far as handicapped persons are concerned, the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act was passed by Parliament which is an important step in the empowerment of persons which disabilities through creation of equal opportunities and protection of their rights. With the enactment of this law, the reservation to physically handicapped persons which was provided only in Group 'C' and 'D' posts has now been extended to identified Group 'A' and 'B' posts filled through Direct Recruitment. Instructions have been issued to the effect that not less than 3% for persons or class of persons with disability of which 1% each shall be reserved for persons suffering from (i) blindness or low vision (ii) hearing impairment (iii) locomotor disability or cerebral palsy, in the posts Identified for each disability.

As far as women are concerned, no specific reservation has been provided in employment matters and they are considered on merit for various positions in public sector undertakings.